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AUTHOR Burkhardt, Joanna; MacDonald, Mary; Rathemacher, Andree; Kelland, J. Laurence; Vocino, Michael

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ABSTRACT

The past 5 years have seen enormous change in the style of reference work that is done by librarians at the University of Rhode Island (URI) Library. Before the arrival of publicly accessible online databases and catalogs, there were clear lines regarding "doing reference" and teaching how to use the library. Now efforts are more directed toward teaching the URI community how to approach the wide array of resources available to them. With this in mind, the Task Force for Teaching and Research recommends a collective shift from thinking of reference and teaching as separate but related activities to restructuring into a Teaching Library where services are actively promoted as the bridge to information empowerment--to be the link between classroom and information resources. The goal of the Information Literacy Plan described in this document is not to undo the current program in library instruction, but to expand and fortify it. This Plan outlines the following: coordination of information literacy efforts, including what the Library Curriculum Committee will be charged with; ways that the information literacy needs of URI students will be addressed; delivery options for addressing the information literacy needs and awareness of URI faculty; objectives of the Information Literacy Program; a chart outlining information literacy concepts that need to be covered throughout the program/curriculum; delivery options through which these concepts can be taught at URI; and suggested implementation at URI for each year of undergraduate study and for graduate students. (AEF)

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Plan for Information Literacy at the University of Rhode Island

By: Joanna Burkhardt, Mary MacDonald, Andree Rathemacher, J.Laurence Kelland & Michael Vocino

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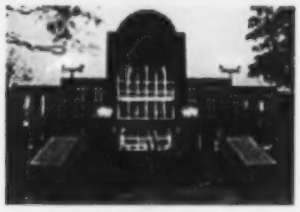

University Libraries

Instruction Services

Plan for Information Literacy at the University of Rhode Island

Information literacy at the University of Rhode Island

Preface

In the Information Age it is a necessity for all URI students, staff, and faculty to be accomplished information users. Recognizing this, we envision a new design for delivering library instruction to the University community. In their position paper on information literacy, the American Association of School Librarians states, "to be prepared for a future characterized by change, students must learn to think rationally and creatively, solve problems, manage and retrieve information, and communicate effectively. By mastering information problem-solving, students will be ready for an information based society and a technological workplace." [http://www.ala.org/aasl/positions/ps-infolit.html] Information literacy is more than library instruction; it includes an understanding of the landscape of information in today's world and knowledge of how to gather, evaluate and use information.

The Association of College & Research Libraries recently approved a document outlining the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* [http://www.ala.org/acrl/ilcomstan.html]. These competencies support and address the needs of individuals to become life long learners. "Information literacy is common to all disciplines, to all learning environments, and to all levels of education. It enables learners to master content and extend their investigations, become more self-directed and assume greater control over their own learning."

Information literacy is the ability to understand the concepts and values of information in the context of data, information and knowledge. Further, it is the ability to understand where information comes from, where it goes and what the relationship is between the learner and the information world. It mean being able to gather, analyze and use information in an effective and meaningful manner.

A Teaching Library

The past five years have seen enormous change in the style of reference work that is done by librarians at the University Library. Before the arrival of publicly accessible online databases and catalogs, there were clear lines regarding "doing reference" and teaching how to use the library. Librarians worked on reference questions that involved using several sources in order to find the answer or solution to a patron's request, checked ready reference sources for the simple reference question, and taught classes on how to use the library and its resources. During the 1990s libraries experienced a dramatic impact due to the development of the Internet and more specifically, the World Wide Web. The ability for libraries to offer patrons access to

web-based databases and multiple online catalogs gave patrons unprecedented access to resources. Previously, librarians executed computer database searches for patrons. Now patrons initiate their own research using the databases and catalogs of libraries across Rhode Island and indeed the world. Our efforts are more directed toward teaching the URI community how to approach the wide array of resources available to them; teaching both information concepts and mechanical manipulations.

With this in mind, the Task Force for Teaching and Research recommends a collective shift from thinking of reference and teaching as separate but related activities. Instead, we recommend restructuring ourselves into a Teaching Library where we actively promote our services as the bridge to information empowerment- to be the link between classroom and information resources. The goal of the Information Literacy Plan is not to undo the current program in library instruction but to expand and fortify it. By adding critical thinking and information concepts to our program we can focus on educating the URI community to become information literate in the broadest sense.

Coordination of Information Literacy Efforts
The Library Curriculum Committee will oversee the development of a University-wide information literacy program.

The Committee will be charged with:

- Producing information literacy competencies for the University community
- Creating objectives and action plans to implement the objectives
- Evaluating the progress of the University community towards these competencies.

The Committee may draw on the knowledge and expertise other groups as needed.

The Information Literacy Program will focus on undergraduate and graduate students as well as the teaching and research needs of the campus faculty.

Students
To address the information literacy needs of our students we recommend the creation of an incremental program teaching information literacy competencies. The program will address the competencies as determined by the Information Literacy Advisory Council in consultation with the Association of College & Research Libraries competency standards [http://www.ala.org/acrl/ilcomstan.html].

The program aims to reach all URI students by:

- Requiring all students to achieve the competencies outlined by the program.
- Developing measurable outcomes and a means for student accountability
- Coordinating with faculty of departments or colleges to address the information literacy needs of each discipline.
- Integrating the concept of information literacy into the curriculum wherever possible.

- Offering students a variety of ways to achieve the competencies in information literacy

Faculty

An information literacy plan addresses faculty in two ways. On the one hand, faculty play an essential role in delivering any information literacy program to students. On the other hand, awareness of information literacy concepts and skills are important to faculty in their own research and teaching. Through collaboration with other teaching faculty, library faculty will better be able to integrate information literacy into the curriculum in a programmatic way.

To address the information literacy needs and awareness of URI faculty we recommend the following delivery options:

- Establish new faculty orientation workshops to introduce the concepts and curriculum of information literacy.
- Hold annual workshops for all faculty to introduce new and improved products and services.
- Work in a consultant role with other teaching faculty by developing models of collaborative instruction where information literacy skills can be built into the curriculum.
- Provide an office or learning laboratory dedicated to the support of librarian/faculty collaboration and faculty needs in course and assignment design.
- Promote currently existing library services and expertise to facilitate the research process.

The Information Literacy Program

It is our intent to relieve what we refer to as "information anxiety" or the perplexing sense of confusion that many students feel when faced with university level research. We also want to eliminate a pattern of library instruction that depends solely on the time and/or interest of the teaching faculty. Librarians will consult with other teaching faculty to integrate and design information literacy competencies into their course assignments. The program intends to establish learning goals for each level of the undergraduate curriculum and additionally to offer learning opportunities for graduate students. Over time, the program will offer a variety of delivery options: information literacy modules, web-based tutorials, credit courses, subject-specific bibliographic instruction, and individual consultations when appropriate.

Information Literacy Concepts

The following chart outlines information literacy concepts that need to be covered throughout the program / curriculum.

Introductory Concepts

1. What is information?
   - What formats does it come in?
   - Who produces it?
2. How it is organized (or not)
   - Classification systems
3. Basic access tools
   - Catalogs
   - Indexes
   - Subject Headings / Subject Descriptors
4. How to retreive information / gather materials
   - Library services, etc.

Advanced Concepts

1. Recognize and articulate information need
2. Define research question
3. Identify key words and concepts
4. Formulate a search strategy
   - Boolean operators
5. Select appropriate information tools.

Subject Specific Concepts

1. Concepts related to individual subject areas, drawing on subject-specific resources, both print and electronic, in particular disciplines or areas of study.

Universal Concepts

1. Evaluating quality of information gathered
   - Authority
   - Currency
   - Purpose
   - Appropriateness
2. Values and issues regarding information
3. Application of information found (organization & presentation skills)

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6. Evaluate results and refocus search if necessary		

Delivery Options
There are a number of delivery options through which these concepts can be taught at URI. Some of these options are already in place, while others would need to be developed.

- Subject-Specific Bibliographic Instruction
- Credit Courses
- Integrated Modules

  Information Literacy Modules can be conceived of as standardized "toolkits" containing information resources, research strategies, in-class exercises, assignments, etc. geared to particular fields, instructional areas, and topics. The modules would provide a concrete way for librarians and other teaching faculty to work together in integrating information literacy concepts and skills throughout the curriculum.

- Web-Based Instructional Materials / Tutorials
- Consultation with Faculty / Assignment Design

Suggested Implementation at URI

Freshman Year
By the end of their freshman year, all students should have mastered the Introductory Concepts (see above). Many will also have been familiarized with some of the Advanced Concepts and will have worked with Subject-Specific Concepts and resources and Universal Concepts.

URI 101 / WRT 101 modules
URI 101 and WRT 101 modules will introduce students to the library and information seeking skills as the first step to information literacy.

In URI 101, students will:

- Become familiar with Library building locations and service points
- Using the HELIN library catalog to locate books and journals
- Understand the concept of subject headings
- Understand Library of Congress call number sequence
- Understand the difference between a catalog and an index

The URI 101 module will consist of in-library instruction, an in-class assignment that is graded by a librarian with the grade being included in the course grade, a brief tour of the library building, and a follow-up assignment facilitated by the course instructor.

In WRT 101, students will:

- Understand what a periodical is and learn the difference between a newspaper, a popular magazine, a trade publication, and a scholarly journal
- Understand what a periodical index is
- Understand subject descriptors and other access points.
- Use the Library's core, interdisciplinary periodical database to find journal articles

The WRT 101 module will consist of in-library instruction, an in-class assignment that is graded by a librarian with the grade being included in the course grade, and a follow-up assignment facilitated by the course instructor.

Many of the materials for the URI 101 and WRT 101 modules will be available on the Web, and at some point an interactive web tutorials may be developed.

LIB 120: Introduction to Information Literacy

Students have the option of taking LIB 120: Introduction to Information Literacy (3 credits) which is a University College General Education option under the English Communication area. A number of sections of LIB 120 will be integrated with freshman "learning communities." In addition, the College of Continuing Education recommends LIB 120 for all Bachelor of General Studies students.

Consultation

Library faculty can also play a role in consulting with other teaching faculty on the design of research-based assignments and exercises.

Sophomore Year

By the end of their sophomore year, most students will have completed their general education requirements. During their sophomore year they will have the continued opportunity to master Introductory and Advanced Information Literacy Concepts and will have worked with Subject-Specific Concepts and resources and Universal Concepts.

To deliver these information literacy concepts during the sophomore year, library faculty will need to work closely with the General Education Program as well as with individual departments and programs to incorporate information literacy modules into the classroom. Library faculty can also play a role in consulting with other teaching faculty on the design of research-based assignments and exercises.

Junior Year

In their junior year, students' course work becomes more subject-specific as most of the courses they take are in their major area of study. By the end of their junior year, students will have strengthened their mastery of Introductory and Advanced Concepts

and will have had extensive experience working with Subject Concepts and resources.

Information literacy in the junior year will be delivered primarily through the use of integrated instructional modules. Library faculty will collaborate with faculty members teaching courses in the students' major areas of study to design assignments, exercises, and instruction that emphasize subject-specific concepts and resources.

LIB140: Special Topics in Information Literacy
Another option for the delivery of Subject Concepts is LIB 140 (340?). Junior year students may opt to take this course, which will offer students in-depth opportunities to learn about information organization and resources in a specific field of study.

Senior Year
By the time students have completed their senior year of study, they should have mastered Basic Concepts and Advanced Concepts. They should have worked extensively with subject-specific resources and Concepts in their fields, and should be competent in applying the Universal Concepts.

One method of demonstrating their mastery of these concepts is through an information literacy portfolio project. We envision the portfolio project as being a possible part of the capstone course for departments and programs committed to information literacy in order to measure students' outcomes in this area. Library faculty will offer guidance to departments and programs in developing portfolio projects.

Information Literacy Portfolio Project / Capstone Project
Departments and programs on campus will be encouraged to integrate information literacy competencies into student capstone projects. Librarians will provide assistance in the form of guidelines and assessment tools.

- Portfolio project should be associated with a senior level course, preferably the capstone course in the declared major, e.g. Management 410.
- Portfolio will be used for assessment and evaluation of the effort, progress and achievement of the student as well as the Information Literacy Program.
- Portfolio project will be a collection of student work that illustrates efforts, progress and achievement of information literate student
- Portfolio may be print or electronic.
- Librarians will design the Information Literacy Portfolio Project Guide for students and a Portfolio Assessment Guide to assist teaching faculty in evaluation.

Comprehensive Examination
Another option for evaluating seniors' mastery of the Information Literacy Concepts is the development and administration of a comprehensive examination in information literacy.

Graduate Students
Some graduate students arrive direct from their undergraduate studies; others may

have timed out for work or family and are just returning after a period of time. All graduate students are beginning a new level of research that is far more sophisticated than they have previously experienced.

To prepare these students

- Seminars in subject specific research processes.
- Half day programs, possibly during Graduate School Orientation in the beginning of each academic year or semester.

Submitted by:
The Library Strategic Planning Task Force for Teaching and Research
(Joanna Burkhardt, Mary MacDonald, Larry Kelland, Andrée Rathemacher, Michael Vocino)
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Revised by:
Joanna Burkhardt
Mary MacDonald
Andrée Rathemacher

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